



# Memorandum

**Planning Division**  
**Community & Neighborhood Department**

**To:** Historic Landmark Commission

**From:** Lex Traugher, Senior Planner

**Date:** October 6, 2016

**Re:** Work Session Expectation Template Draft

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On September 1, 2016, Planning Staff presented a report to the HLC entitled “HLC Process & Recommendations Study” (Case number PLNPCM2016-00330). This report was prepared in response to a petition initiated by Mayor Biskupski, requesting that the Planning Division study and make any recommendations to amend the City’s zoning ordinance as it pertains to the roles and responsibilities of the HLC. The Mayor asked the Planning Division to take a comprehensive review of how zoning implementation is executed with regard to the H Historic Preservation Overlay zoning district.

One of the recommendations noted in the “HLC Process & Recommendations Study” was to work with the HLC to produce a work sessions expectations template. Currently, Salt Lake City has an informal process to encourage property owners or developers to consult with Planning staff or to hold an informal work session prior to holding a public hearing with the HLC. The purpose of a work session template is to establish a formal document that indicates what a work session is and what it is not, a typical work session format or structure, the roles of the various parties involved, and desired work session outcomes.

As indicated in the “HLC Process & Recommendations Study”, a work session is a tool that is used in Utah and across the country. Work sessions can improve transparency and predicatability for the parties involved. They allow applicants an opportunity to have a discussion with the HLC about any aspect of a project prior to staff recommendation or a final decision. Work sessions seem to improve predicatability and decrease the need for multiple public hearings by allowing digestion of complex projects and free exploration of ideas prior to a public hearing and a decision.

Please find a draft “Work Session Expectation Template” for your review.

## ***Next Step/Action***

Planning Staff requests that the Historic Landmark Commission review the proposed template and provide comments to augment or ameliorate the document so that it is thorough and concise. Once the template is

finalized, Planning Staff will be requesting that the HLC adopt the document as a part of the HLC's "Rules of Procedure".

**Attachment:**

Work Session Template Draft 10/6/16



## WHAT IS A WORK SESSION?

A work session is an informal, yet highly organized and structured, meeting with various players who have a stake in a given project with the purpose of “working” through issues, making decisions, and documenting results while moving toward the production of a final product. Further, a work session is a vehicle for addressing major issues or concerns more effectively. Presumably they make future public hearings more productive, focusing in on whether a proposal meets standards and guidelines. A work session is different from a public hearing because in a work session no testimony is taken from the public (although the public may attend the session), no staff analysis or recommendation is provided, and the work session is non-binding. It is an opportunity for the applicant to bring a complex project to the HLC and have formal access to the entire commission in a public setting in order to explain the concept of a project, answer questions, and garner direction to make the process decision making more predictable when revising or returning for a final decision.

A work session would be coordinated and facilitated by Planning Staff and would include, but not be limited to, the following core characteristics:

- *Work sessions have a purpose that is aligned to project objectives* – They are designed to achieve a specific goal or project deliverable.
- *Work sessions encourage discovery* – A work session is a place for healthy debate and discussion; a place of discovery where the ideas and opinions of the participants contribute to exploring and embracing the best outcome of a project.
- *Work sessions are systematic* – The work session has a well-defined approach and structure and is not an ad hoc meeting of interested parties. Preparation, work session delivery, and follow-up activities are all part of the work session process with clear roles and responsibilities.
- *Work sessions are collaborative* – The participants do not attend a work session so that an expert can tell them what to do, all parties involved are viewed as experts. The participants are experts led by a facilitator who seeks input and involvement to achieve work session objectives.
- *Work sessions create substantive outputs* – Work sessions result in high quality discussion and direction, and are designed to produce the decisions and content required for the delivery of a high quality product in the end. They may improve predictability and decrease the need for multiple public hearings by allowing the “digestion” of complex issues and feedback from a commission prior to a formal public hearing.

- *Work sessions promote accountability* – Direction within the work session are made by consensus. Participants are willing to be held responsible for the direction given during a work session.

## **WORK SESSION EXPECTATIONS**

### WHAT IS PLANNING STAFF'S ROLE IN A WORK SESSION?

Planning Staff's primary role in the work session environment is that of neutral facilitator.

Good facilitation requires:

- Planning and the ability to think through desired objectives and the creation a plan to achieve them,
- Flexibility to change direction to accommodate group needs,
- Objectivity to guide the group toward objectives without bias, and the discussion of key issues,
- Thorough knowledge of City Plans and associated policies, ordinances, and guidelines as they relate to historic preservation, and;
- Good communication skills to collect from and disseminate information to the group effectively.

### WHAT IS AN APPLICANT'S ROLE IN A WORK SESSION?

The expectation of an applicant in a work session is to provide adequate information to Planning Staff and the HLC to facilitate a meaningful and production discussion. At a minimum, the application materials required by the City's Zoning Ordinance in terms of a "complete submittal" should be provided. In addition, any materials that are deemed important by an applicant to further promote an in-depth discussion should be submitted at the applicant's discretion. Items requested by Planning Staff to enlighten and explain issues in further detail for the all participant's benefit are also encouraged. In short, the expectation of the applicant is to provide the minimum required application materials and any additional information for the purpose of facilitating a productive work session ie: moving toward issue identification, analysis of alternatives, and solutions.

### WHAT IS THE HLC'S ROLE IN A WORK SESSION?

The expectation of the HLC is to consider materials provided by an applicant and by Planning Staff, and to provide constructive feedback and direction on a given proposal based on adopted plans, zoning ordinance standards, and preservation guidelines. The role of the HLC is not to design a project by "committee", rather it is to provide input and advice for an applicant so that a mutually agreeable product results through the participation of all parties involved.

## **TYPICAL WORK SESSION STRUCTURE**

A work session with the HLC would typically be organized utilizing the following meeting structure:

- The HLC chairperson would introduce the project.
- Planning Staff would provide an introductory overview of the project and identify issues and concerns based on adopted standards and guidelines.
- Questions and discussion between the members of the HLC and Planning Staff.
- Applicant opportunity to provide a proposal overview to include how the proposal meets adopted standards and guidelines.
- Questions and discussion between the members of the HLC and the applicant.
- Verbal summary of the discussion including issues and concerns.
- Verbal summary of further direction from the HLC to Planning Staff and the applicant.

After the work session, Planning Staff would provide a summary document of the work session discussion to the applicant and would conduct any necessary follow-up.

## **DESIRED WORK SESSION OUTCOMES**

The following are benefits that should result from a productive and successful work session, and should be objectives of any work session conducted by the HLC:

- Ownership of the work session outcome(s),
- Improved project quality; meeting or closer to meeting required standards,
- Improved working relationships,
- Informed decision making,
- Predictability, issue identification, issue exploration and expectations,
- Reduction of the overall project elapsed time,
- Reduction of the risk of “scope creep” at the public hearing.